

science and technology portfolio. Such a partnership to stimulate scientific discovery and new technologies will take America into the new century well-equipped for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

The future, it is often said, has no constituency. But the truth is, we must all be the constituency of the future. We have a duty—to ourselves, to our children, to future genera-

tions—to make these farsighted investments in science and technology to help us master this moment of change and to build a better America for the 21st century.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
April 9, 1997.

Remarks on the Implementation of Welfare Reform and an Exchange With Reporters

April 10, 1997

The President. Welcome to the members of the Cabinet and their representatives as well as to the members of the press. One month ago, I directed the members of the Cabinet to do everything they can to hire people off the welfare rolls into available jobs in Government. And I asked the Vice President to lead and coordinate this effort. Today we are here to receive each agency's specific plans to do that.

We have the good fortune to begin with some encouraging news. Today I am pleased to report that over the last 4 years, from January of '93 to January of '97, America's welfare rolls declined by 2.8 million people. The welfare rolls have now declined by as much in the past 4 years as they increased in the previous 25 years. And that's a great tribute to all of those who worked on welfare reform as well as to the strength of the American economy.

In the next 4 years, we have to move another 2 million people off welfare to meet the targets of the welfare reform law. We have all got to take responsibility to see that the jobs are there so that people can leave welfare and become permanent members of the work force. Of course, the vast majority of these jobs will have to come from the private sector. And I will convene a meeting of business leaders here at the White House next month to talk about what more can be done to aid that endeavor. I also want to say that the members of the Cabinet that have special responsibility there will be doing more. And I'm glad to announce today that, at the initiative of Aida Alvarez, Betsy Myers, the Director of Women's Outreach here

at the White House, will leave the White House and move to the Small Business Administration to coordinate a new effort there to encourage small- and women-owned businesses to hire people from welfare to work.

But the Government must do its share as well. The Federal Government, after all, is a large employer in the United States. We employ a little over one percent of the total work force of our country. Today I'm pleased to announce that we will hire at least 10,000 welfare recipients over the next 4 years, and we will urge private contractors that work with Government to hire people off welfare as well.

I'm especially pleased that six of those who will be hired from the welfare rolls will work right here in the White House. Now, let me be clear: These will not be make-work jobs. These will be jobs that actually need to be fulfilled, work that needs to be done for the American people. We will demand the highest performance from the new employees and insist that they live up to their responsibilities. But we will also offer them a chance at a new beginning.

Today we have with us two former welfare recipients who have found that new beginning. The Vice President and I just had the honor of meeting with them in the Oval Office. They are on my left. To my far left is Rebecca Wilson of Clinton, Iowa. That has a nice ring to it. [Laughter] She is a single mother of two who was on welfare, working and attending and—then while she was attending Clinton Community College. Last year, she got a part-time job as a clerk in her local Social Security office.

That enabled her to leave the welfare rolls while she finished school. With her supervisor's encouragement, she's now on her way to a business degree. She just got a raise and a promotion 2 days ago. Congratulations.

Rebecca Wilson. Thank you.

The President. And she's been offered a permanent job with the Social Security Administration after she graduates.

Tonya Graham of Plainview, Texas, had a child when she was 16, went on welfare while attending college part-time. She found out about a job at the Social Security Administration through one of her professors. She left welfare the very month she was hired, finished her degree, and is now working full-time as a Social Security claims representative.

These two women are examples that, not just for the Government but for the private and non-profit sectors as well, if we give people who are on welfare the opportunity, they will do the rest, helping us to break the cycle of dependence and make responsibility a way of life.

The decisions we make in this room today will enable thousands of more American families to remake their lives as Rebecca and Tonya have done. Together, we have already reduced the welfare rolls by 2.8 million; that is the greatest reduction in our history. Now we have to finish the job, and the Federal Government has to do its part by offering jobs to at least 10,000 more welfare recipients over the next 4 years.

We can elevate our most fundamental values of family and work and responsibility and make welfare reform work.

Now I'd like to ask the Vice President, who has done so much to reinvent our Government and who spearheaded this effort to get all the agencies together around this number, and ask him to say a few words.

[At this point, the Vice President made brief remarks.]

Q. Mr. President, if people want to get these jobs, if they think they're eligible for them, how are they going to find out about it? How do they learn whether they can qualify?

The President. Do you want to answer that?

The Vice President. They will find out from the Federal departments in their area. We also have a job bank on the Internet and you can, from a library or from a friend who has a personal computer or if you have an Internet connection in some other way, you can plug into

the job bank, and they will be listed there, and you can go to the Federal office building in your area.

The President. But the main thing is, you see, the Federal departments will all be trying to meet their targets. And the people who are placing the welfare workers who will be working for the State, people who interview the people on welfare, will be able to tell them, "Look, the Federal Government's got a program here, and they're trying to hire people, and we'll check around at all of these different agencies in your community and see if there's an opening there." That's how welfare workers—welfare workers at the State level actually interview these people, but they will all know now what our national goals are, and then they'll be able to determine quickly whether, by department, there's an opening in the area. And the welfare recipients will be coming in under the new welfare reform law to these workers, and they will be working together to try to help them get a job within the time prescribed.

Q. Can we ask Ms. Wilson and Ms. Graham if they are making ends meet with their job? The Vice President mentioned child care being a problem. As a single mother of two, are you able to make enough money?

Ms. Wilson. I have a lot of support from my family and friends and all the people around me. So it's been rough, but they're there for me if I need them.

Ms. Graham. And I do not have any small children that are not in school.

Q. What about all the people that do?

The President. We put \$4 billion more into child care, keep in mind. But one of things that we have to work on here is we gave the money to the States. Keep in mind that the States are in a unique position now to provide even more for child care than we appropriated in the bill, because their block grant is tied to the moment—the highest—the peak of the welfare rolls. If I make a mistake, Secretary Shalala, correct me. The block grant is tied to the peak population of welfare rolls, which we reached sometime in early '94. So they're getting money now that's more money than they would otherwise get, because the welfare rolls have gone down so much.

Plus, there's a \$4 billion add-on in the welfare reform bill to the States to help them provide affordable child care. What we have to do—and that's one of the reasons that this process

has been so important—is we’ve had to work through with each department, since they don’t get part of that block grant, whether there’s some way they can be a part of it, or the recipient, at least, if it’s out in the States as opposed to DC, could get some benefit from it. And we’ll have to work through all that.

But I think that there won’t be any problem with that, and at least—I think one of the things that will happen as a result of welfare reform, by the way, that will be one of the ancillary benefits is that there will be a lot more child care slots opened up in the country, and that will make available more affordable child care to people who aren’t on welfare and haven’t ever been on welfare. That’s one of the goals that I have, and I believe it will occur.

Q. Mr. President, the two women who are with you are living proof that it can be done, in a sense, without a special program or a special idea. I imagine the critics would say, we don’t necessarily need all of this special push.

The President. But you do if you want everybody to be like them. That is, let me—remember what I said all along, from the day I got here and we started these welfare reform experiments over 4 years ago, I said all along, look, the system we have works fine for about 40 to 45 percent of the people because they are like these women. And nearly everybody on welfare wants to get off, wants to be self-supporting, wants to be an independent member of society, would rather pay taxes than draw from the public treasury.

But the system we have—the way it works, especially for people with very young children made it actually—it was a disincentive for a lot of people to get off welfare. So all we tried to do is to create a set of circumstances now where 100 percent of the able-bodied people on welfare will be able to do what these two women have done on their own under the old system.

If we didn’t do anything, about 4 in 10 people on welfare would continue to be on a while, get the help they need, get right off, and go on with their lives. What we’re trying to do is to get to the other 60 percent. That’s what welfare reform is all about.

And the reason we had—let me remind you—the reason we had the biggest drop ever in the last 4 years, according to a study done by Janet Yellen and the Council of Economic Advisers. They say about a third of the drop in

the welfare rolls was due directly to specific welfare reform efforts. And a quarter of the drop was due to other efforts like the 50 percent increase in child support collections. And a little over 40 percent was due to the improvement in the economy. And that corresponds with a little over 40 percent who always do—who did well under the old welfare system.

So we’re working on the other 60 percent. But the other 60 percent had become a significant problem for America because you were having generational dependence on welfare.

Webster Hubbell

Q. Mr. President, I have to ask you a question about another topic because this is the only time I will see you today, but—

The President. Go ahead.

Q. —just a little while ago, Mrs. Clinton was asked about questions that keep coming up about efforts—whether the White House knew of or was behind or whether there were any efforts to pay hush money to Webster Hubbell. And she called it “part of the continuing saga of Whitewater, the never-ending fictional conspiracy that honest-to-goodness reminds me of some people’s obsession with UFO’s and the Hale-Bopp comet.” [Laughter] And I was wondering—

The President. Did she say that? [Laughter] That’s pretty good. [Laughter]

Q. I was wondering if you share that sentiment? And also, we haven’t had a chance to—[laughter].

The President. Well, if I didn’t, I wouldn’t disagree with her in public. [Laughter]

Q. We haven’t had a chance to hear what your comment is to the apology that Webb Hubbell made and his claim that he was a con artist who fooled people here at the White House. Are you angry at him now? He seems to have caused you a whole lot of trouble, and he seems to be causing it—

The President. Well, no, I’m not angry at him anymore because he’s paid a very high price for the mistake he made. And, you know, if he hadn’t come up here and he’d stayed home and tried to work it through, he would have paid a price, but it would have been a smaller one.

But let me remind you that everybody pays in life. There’s—somehow we all wind up paying for whatever we do, and he paid a very high price. And he’s apologized, and I accept his

apology. He's got four wonderful children and a fine wife, and he's done a lot of wonderful things in his life, and I hope he'll be able to go on and do some more wonderful things. And as far as I'm concerned, that's why we have a criminal justice system: people get punished; they pay their price; and they're supposed to be able to go on. He got punished and paid quite a high price, and I hope he'll be able to go on with his life now.

President's Health

Q. How are you getting along on those crutches?

The President. I'm doing great. These are my stealth crutches. [Laughter] I think really they were developed as an offshoot of B-2 technology, see, and I like them quite a lot. [Laughter]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a Cabinet meeting.

Remarks at the Radio and Television Correspondents Association Dinner April 10, 1997

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Members of Congress, members of the press, fellow sufferers—[laughter]—I would like to thank the Radio and Television Correspondents Association for inviting me this evening. I want to give Terry Murphy a special thanks for the kind introduction, and also, given my condition, I'd like to give a special thank-you to the Ridgewell Catering Company for bringing me here tonight. [Laughter] Enough laughs.

I have come here tonight to speak about a topic of perennial concern in Washington, something we never get around to doing anything about. And that is the close, some would even say cozy relationship, between the rarified elite who make public policy and those who report on it. And on that topic, just let me say this: Congratulations, Andrea. [Laughter] You know, that fella standing next to you in the newspaper photos a few days ago—[laughter]—he looked exactly like Alan Greenspan, only exuberant. [Laughter]

I want all of you to know that, until recently, I had planned out a really dramatic entrance to this dinner. [Laughter] And then, George Bush stole my thunder. [Laughter] I mean, look at this: This guy is 72 years old; he jumps out of a plane at 12,000 feet; he lands without a scratch. [Laughter] I fall 6 inches, and I'm crippled up for 6 months. It's ridiculous.

Now, as you might imagine, my injured knee adds complications to my schedule. In fact, you

know, just when I was on the way over here tonight—[laughter]—as you have seen, my Press Secretary, Mike McCurry, just handed me a note. According to wire reports, former President Bush has just bungee jumped off the Seattle Space Needle. [Laughter]

That reminds me—I was supposed to make another announcement tonight. Mr. Murphy has asked me to tell you that the Radio and Television Correspondents Association has decided to adopt the practices of the Democratic National Committee. [Laughter] That means you can all pick up your \$1,000 refund checks on the way out tonight. [Laughter]

You know, I'm getting a little sick of these fundraising stories. [Laughter] But here I am, I'm doing the best to do the job the American people sent me here to do. But with all this ruckus in Washington these days, we have to work harder and harder to sort of be heard through the din. So my staff worked up a few new ideas that we thought might break through. I want you to be the judge. After all, it's your din. [Laughter]

Here are the suggestions: Take a cue from the TV show "Ellen." Start a rumor that in the last Presidential press conference of the season, my character will become a libertarian. [Laughter] Announce that we've discovered signs of life on Mars. We already tried that, and some of you bought it; I couldn't believe it. [Laughter] Announce that I will fight